(d) whether any steps have been taken for speedy approval by the Planning Commission for its implementation?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI AJAY SINGH): (a) to (d). An Engineering-cum-Traffic Survey for a rail bridge across the river Ganga near Patna has been taken up. Further action on the project will depend upon the results of the Survey and availability of resources in the coming years.

Implementation of Essential Commodities Act

676. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the All India Advisory Council on Public Distribution System has called for sustained and effective implementation of the Essential Commodities Act to streamline the Public Distribution System in the country;

(b) if so, the reactions of the Government thereto; and

(c) what further steps Government propose to take to streamline the Public Distribution System in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI RAM PUJAN PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Union Government has also been advising the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations to undertake strict and sustained enforcement of the provisions of Essential Commodities Act and other similar legislations. The States / UTs have also been requested to continually strengthen and streamline the PDS, through activising Vigilance Committees, empowering delivery systems to fair price shops, consider supply of additional commodities of mass consumption through fair price shops and undertake constant monitoring of availability situation.

Punctuality of Trains and Amenities to Commuters

677. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the punctuality of the trains and better amenities to its commuters have been badly affected during the last six months;

(b) whether Government propose to maintain punctuality in trains and provide adequate amenities to its commuters; and

(c) if so, the details of the steps taken / propose to be taken to improve the services of trains throughout the country?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI AJAY SINGH): (a) Unavoidable causes like devastation by cyclone on East Coast, heavy unprecedented rains in Andhra Pradesh, Bombay area and Rajasthan, dense fog in January, 1990 besides Bandhs in Assam, Punjab, Tamilnadu, alarm chain pulling etc. Total power break down in West Bengal on 26-6-90 and a few equipment failures did affect the punctuality of trains. The amenities to passengers are being maintained.

(b) and (c). Yes, Sir. Monitoring and intensive chasing is continuing to improve performance.

Job Scandal Involving Indian Workers in Iraq

678. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether hundreds of Indian workers are stranded without wages and adequate amenities in Iraq due to an alleged job scandal and swindling by a Bombay based recruiting agent as